

Los Padres National Forest



Figueroa Mountain Wildflower Update – Mid April Update of the 2012 Season

Hello everyone! Welcome to the mid April update. Beautiful California poppies are spectacularly exhibiting themselves throughout Figueroa Mountain. While the carpeted areas are not completely filled in as in wet years, they are still magnificent and very much worth a trip. If you are planning a trip, it should be done soon, as it is hard to predict how long the poppies will be peaking this year.

Starting at the first cattle guard, the wildflowers in this area are rapidly declining. Chinese houses are still in abundance along with hummingbird sage, however, only a few fiesta flowers and buttercups can be seen here. As one makes the turn along the second bend, on the left, a handful of small pink owl's clovers are still present. As one approaches the rock formation on the right, look for vivid, Red Indian paintbrush as it struggles to come through. As one continues under the tree canopy, look for miniature lupine, Chinese houses, red clover, buttercups and a few Johnny jump-ups.

As you get to the opened, rusty gate, look on the ground to the right and find tiny cream cups that are still in bloom, along with some fillaree.

Other wildflowers to look for as you continue your uphill climb include buttercups, goldfields, coreopsis, shooting stars, California poppies, fillaree, royal lupine, Ceanothus, buckwheat and golden yarrow. On the serpentine formation on the right, beautiful pink prickly phlox are still in bloom. Lovely orange wall flowers are still plentiful just past the serpentine wall on the right. Mariposa lilies are beginning to bloom in the grassy meadows, however, look closely as they are hiding in the tall green grassy meadows.

At Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the bottom), very few flowers are in bloom. Fillaree and goldfields are covering portions of the ground and the blue-eyed grass is starting to bloom. The chocolate lilies never made it. The plants appeared but the flowers did not. Across Vista Point, look for poppies, golden yarrow and coreopsis.

In the field to the right, before Tunnell Ranch Road, look for wall flowers, fillaree and buttercups scattered beautifully among that field. Check out the beautiful bush lupine blooming right across this area. It is quite striking.

About a quarter mile further, the popular poppy hillside and slopes are in their peak (see picture above). The tuft poppies are spectacular at this time. This is the area that is normally carpeted with poppies however, while there are still many bare spots, the poppies are still spectacular. There seems to be more poppies in the slopes where the burn went through in November of 2010 than on the hillside. Regardless, they are still breathtaking. The sky lupine and bush lupine are still beautiful, but appear to be declining. Caterpillar phacalias and blue headed gillias are beginning to bloom in this area as well.

Continuing on Figueroa Mountain Road, between the campground and the Davy Brown trailhead, one can find sky/bush lupine, golden yarrow, Ceanothus, and lovely, purple Chias on the hillsides to the left. About one quarter mile past the Davy Brown trailhead, look for a large dirt turn out to the left. In the fields adjacent to this turn out, chocolate lilies are present but are not lasting long. While some are still in bloom, others are rapidly fading. Beyond this area, carpets of goldfields and tidy tips are quite visible. Indian paintbrush, coreopsis and buttercups are also showing off their beautiful colors. One can also find more stunning chocolate lilies, still in full bloom, along the pipe fence on the right.

At Ranger Peak, keep your eyes open for baby blue eyes as they peek through the grass. One can find them just beyond the gate and throughout the shaded areas on the right along Ranger Peak. Also look for miner's lettuce, fiddle neck and purple phacalias.

From Ranger Peak to Cachuma Saddle, bush lupine, bush poppies, golden yarrow, purple and caterpillar phacalias, fiddle neck, red clover, wall flowers, purple nightshade and chia can be found along this stretch. There is also a lovely wall

colored by beautiful, Red Indian paintbrush. There was also a siting of pink speckled clarkia, known by many as farewell to spring.

Unlike the last update, Sunset Valley is quite colorful. One can find Ceanothus, golden yarrow, chia, poppies, milk thistle, coulter lupine, popcorn flower, fillaree, Chinese houses, spiny lupine, prickly phlox, purple phacalias, blue dicks, baby blue eyes and sticky leaf monkey flowers next to the creek.

Happy Canyon is also quite colorful with its plethora of wildflowers. Poppies, vetch, golden yarrow, mustard, clematis, spiny lupine, royal lupine, morning glories, bush lupine, blue headed gilia, bush poppies and blue dicks can all be spotted while heading out Happy Canyon. As one makes themselves to what used to be Cachuma Campground, look for beautiful, dark purple fiesta flowers on the right side of the road in the shaded areas. As you go beyond the opened gate, look towards the right and discover the picturesque rock walls come alive with deep orange to red hues of beautiful Indian paintbrush. Canyon peas, Mexican elderberry, prickly phlox and popcorn flower can also be found in this area. As you make your final descent down Happy Canyon, delicate mariposa lilies can be spotted through the tall, wispy, green grass. Coreopsis, milk thistle and blue-eyed grass, cactus flower, purple sage, purple nightshade, pearly everlasting, morning glories, fiesta flowers, Mexican elderberry and a few shooting stars are all present for your viewing and photographing pleasure.

There will be a guided drive and stroll wildflower tour of Figueroa on Saturday, April 21, 2012. Interested parties are asked to meet at the Figueroa Station by 9:15. The tour will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring water, a lunch, comfortable shoes and a camera (ok, the camera is optional, but you'll wish you had)!

That's all for this update. Look for our next wildflower update in two weeks. Until then, happy viewing! For more information, please contact Helen Tarbet at 805-925-9538, ext. 246, or by e-mail at htarbet@fs.fed.us.



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